



**CIRCULATING CITY/TOWNSHIP
NOMINATING AND QUALIFYING PETITION FORMS**

Michigan Department of State
Bureau of Elections
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CIRCULATING CITY/TOWNSHIP PETITION FORMS

The following is a summary of the laws, court rulings and Attorney General opinions which govern the validity of signatures on city/township nominating and qualifying petition forms.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- A signature is acceptable if it includes the signer's name (cursive and printed); the signer's street address or rural route number; the signer's Zip Code; and a proper date.
- Each signer must affix his or her signature to a petition sheet which bears -- in the heading of the sheet -- the name of the city or township and county in which the signer is registered to vote. The heading of the petition sheet may not list more than one city or township.
- A signature is invalid if the signer is (1) not registered to vote in Michigan or (2) registered to vote in the state but not in the city or township listed in the heading of the petition sheet.
- Certain irregularities are accepted. For further information, see "Acceptable Sheet Irregularities" and "Acceptable Signature Irregularities" on the following pages.

PETITION SHEET VALIDITY

HEADING

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following irregularities in the heading of the sheet:

- City or township where circulated not listed.
- Village or "unincorporated place" listed instead of township of circulation when village or "unincorporated place" is not contained within a single township.
- Required information concerning candidate or office sought omitted.

CIRCULATOR'S CERTIFICATE

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following irregularities in the circulator's certificate:

- Not signed by circulator.
- Signed by more than one circulator.

- Not dated or incompletely dated.
- Dated before all signature dates.
- City or township of registration not listed.
- No street address or rural route number listed.

ACCEPTABLE SHEET IRREGULARITIES

The following irregularities do not affect the validity of petition sheets:

- No mark to indicate whether the jurisdiction of registration is a “city” or a “township.” (Note: sheet is acceptable regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)
- Both the “city” box and the “township” box are marked. (Note: sheet is acceptable regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)
- Village or “unincorporated place” listed instead of township when village or “unincorporated place” is contained within a single township.
- Illegible circulator signature.
- Any of the following: circulator prints name in entry provided for signature; circulator fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; circulator enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: A circulator’s signature is not acceptable if circulator prints name in entry provided for printed name and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Circulator fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Circulator lists village or “unincorporated place” instead of township of registration when village or “unincorporated place” is contained within a single township.

PETITION SIGNATURE VALIDITY

A signature is not acceptable if it contains one or more of the irregularities or omissions listed

below. The codes used to mark irregularities and omissions on petition sheets are shown to the left of the descriptions.

- CO Signature crossed out prior to filing.
- OC Address outside of city or township listed in heading.
- ND Signature not dated or incompletely dated.
- ED Signature dated before first date permitted under law.
- SDC Signature dated after circulator dated sheet.
- NA No street address or rural route number listed.
- IN Signature appears as follows: Mrs. Smith, Mr. Smith, John, Jane.
- MC Miscellaneous identification problem.

ACCEPTABLE SIGNATURE IRREGULARITIES

The following irregularities do not affect the validity of petition signatures:

- Signature appears as follows: J. Smith; J.B. Smith; Mrs. J. Brown; Mrs. J.B. Brown; Mrs. John Brown.
- Illegible signature.
- Any of the following: signer prints name in entry provided for signature; signer fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; signer enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: A signature is not acceptable if signer prints name in entry provided for printed name -- and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Signer fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Ditto marks.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL ADVISED

Michigan contains 83 counties, 272 cities, 1,242 townships and 261 villages. Contained within Michigan's townships are numerous "unincorporated places" which bear separate, unique names. Additionally, all of the state is served by post offices with names that in many cases do not correspond to the names of the cities, townships and villages they serve. Circulators using the "city/township" petition form are advised of the following:

CITIES AND TOWNSHIPS: All registered voters in Michigan are registered in a single city or township within the state. Because many cities and townships share the same name, it is important that the place of registration listed in the heading of the petition sheet be clearly identified as a “city” or a “township.” For example, in Shiawassee County there is a City of Owosso and a Township of Owosso.

It is emphasized that if a registered voter signs a petition sheet that lists -- in its heading -- the wrong community of registration, the signature is invalid. For example, if a voter registered in the City of Owosso signs a sheet which lists the Township of Owosso in its heading, the signature is invalid.

A number of cities in the state overlap county boundary lines. (No townships overlap county boundaries.) When obtaining a signature from a voter who is registered in a city that crosses county boundaries, make sure that the voter signs a sheet which properly identifies the voter’s city and county of registration.

VILLAGES: Villages are Michigan’s smallest units of government. Some villages are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Villages are not contained within nor do they cross into cities.)

A village resident who signs a “city/township” petition form must sign a sheet which bears – in its heading – the name of the village resident’s township of registration. Further, the signer must be registered to vote in the township. A signature affixed to the petition by a village resident will be found invalid if the person is not registered at the township level.

If an error is made and the name of a village is listed in the heading of a petition sheet, the sheet will be accepted if the village is wholly contained within a single township. As noted above, the signers of the sheet must hold registrations at the township level. A petition sheet will be found invalid if it lists – in its heading – the name of a village that crosses township boundaries.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES: Michigan contains a number of unincorporated places that do not qualify as units of government as do cities, townships and villages. Some unincorporated places are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Unincorporated places are not contained within nor do they cross into cities. Exceptions may be found.) Michigan residents who live in unincorporated places register to vote with their township clerk.

A resident of an unincorporated place who wishes to sign a “city/township” petition form must sign a sheet which bears – in its heading – the name of the person’s township of registration. If an error is made and the name of an unincorporated place is listed in the heading of a petition sheet, the sheet will be accepted if the unincorporated place is wholly contained within a single township. A petition sheet will be found invalid if it lists – in its heading -- the name of an unincorporated place that crosses township boundaries.

POST OFFICES AND ZIP CODES: All post offices are referred to by name and serve

delivery areas of varying sizes. Each delivery area is assigned a Zip Code. In some cases, the name of a person's post office will correspond to the name of the person's city or township of residence. In other cases, especially in sparsely populated areas, the name of the person's post office will not correspond to the name of the person's city or township of residence. Thus, a person's mailing address may or may not correspond to the name of the city or township where the person is registered to vote. For example, East Lansing residents are registered to vote in the City of East Lansing and have an East Lansing mailing address. However, persons registered to vote in Genesee Township, Richfield Township and Vienna Township in Genesee County have a Mt. Morris mailing address.

When circulating a "city/township" petition form – especially in sparsely populated areas – make sure that potential signers of the petition correctly identify the city or township in which they are registered to vote and sign a petition sheet which bears the name of that city or township. For example, if a voter registered in Genesee Township, Genesee County sign a sheet which lists Mt. Morris (the name of the voter's post office), the signature is invalid.

IMPORTANT

The information provided above is offered as a summary of the provisions which govern the validity of petition signatures; it is not a complete interpretation of the governing laws. Questions may be addressed to:

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Bureau of Elections
P.O. Box 20126
Lansing, Michigan 48901-0726
Telephone: (517) 373-2540
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